

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Service  
Indian Health Service  
Rockville, Maryland

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INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CIRCULAR 88-9

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AREA CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

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PURPOSE

To outline Indian Health Service (IHS) policy concerning responsibilities of Indian Health Service Area Chief Medical Officers.

To assure that IHS meets its responsibility to provide quality medical and health care, it is essential that medical input is provided at the Area level. To this end, a physician will have the primary responsibility for maintaining the professional integrity, quality, and effectiveness of health care activities including both therapeutic clinical services and Health Promotion/Disease Prevention. This professional will report directly to the Area Director.

POLICY

- A. Each Area Director will appoint a physician on a full-time basis to serve as a Chief Medical Officer. This function may be combined with that of Deputy Director depending upon Area needs and this is endorsed. If the roles are separate, it is essential that Area organization assure a major role to the Chief Medical Officer in policy setting and management of the Area.
- B. The Chief Medical Officer position will be filled by a physician who meets at least the following requirements:

"Graduation from an approved United States or Canadian Medical School with completion of an approved internship, or graduation from a recognized foreign medical school with Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification; unrestricted licensure in one State; and, certification by a U.S. Medical Specialty Board."

PLUS:

Five (5) years of post-training medical or public health experience in the United States with at least two years involved in the actual delivery of health services in the Indian Health Service: plus management experience such as Clinical Director or other significant administrative program responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

## I. Professional Staff and Service Unit Responsibilities

1. Works with the Area Director on the planning, coordination, and management of all aspects of the Area's health care delivery programs.
2. Sets Area policy regarding the patterns of medical practice for each Indian Health Service facility. Establishes as a highest priority the attainment and maintenance of Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAEO) certification.
3. Reviews the medical practices and procedures at each Indian Health Service facility to assure they are appropriate, of high quality, and consistent with Indian Health Service policy.
4. Assures that medical care quality Assurance review mechanisms are operating adequately and monitored at all Indian Health Service facilities.
5. Reviews and Assures that satisfactory patient referral policies And mechanisms exist at all Service Units.
6. Serves as ombudsman for clinical staff, communicating to the Area Director their views, needs, and concerns involving policy, problems, practices, and procedures which could affect the quality of care rendered.
7. Reviews And approves By-laws and Rules and Regulations developed by hospitals and clinics.
8. Approves Clinical Director appointments.
9. Reviews performance of the Clinical Director with the Service Unit Director, And has review Authority regarding personnel evaluations performed on direct health care providers by the Service Unit Director and Clinical Director.
10. Reviews And comments Appropriately on qualification requirements and selection of Service Unit Directors.
11. Reviews position descriptions and billets of direct health care providers regarding professional qualifications and classification standards.

12. Reviews performance evaluations of all medical officers and assumes responsibility for recruitment, assignment, retention, \*continuing education, and career development of physicians.
13. Provides for appropriate training and/or education of direct health care providers.
14. Approves all direct health care student and resident experiences within the Area.
15. Is a member of Governing Body of all Area health care facilities.  
  
Participates in reviewing actions regarding the suspension of clinical staff privileges of direct health care providers. Reports to State licensing boards on Area actions taken (suspension of privileges, removal from medical staff).

## II. Resource Management Responsibilities

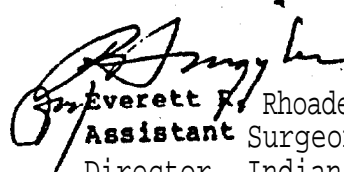
1. participates in decisions regarding the distribution of all health care resources within the Area.
2. Participates in setting priorities for expenditure of contract health service funds; monitors quality of contract medical services provided.
3. Reviews medical equipment purchases. Assures that the Clinical Director of each Service Unit is involved in setting of Service Unit priorities.
4. Reviews all Tribal health care contracts to assure that the service to be provided will at least equal the quality of services provided by the Indian Health Service.  
  
Establishes review criteria for contracted programs and assures review for compliance with contract.
5. Responds to Tribal needs and concerns about the nature and quality of medical services provided by IHS.

## AREA OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Informs Indian Health Service health care providers of new IHS programs; interprets policy decisions which could have an impact on them and their work.
2. Defines and declares a public health emergency and takes appropriate action to resolve the emergency.
3. Chairs the Area Committee on Research and Publications.
4. Conducts final reviews of the medical/technical design aspects of proposed new health care facility construction.

5. SUPERSESSION

This circular supersedes IHS Circular 78-2 dated May 15, 1978.

  
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